



Minutes of the Overleg Vergadering (2) of the FSR FMG '21- '22
Faculty Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural sciences

Date: 6th of December 2021

Location: Online via Zoom

Present executive board FMG:	Agneta Fischer, Sterre Minkes.
Present FSR FMG '21-'22:	Joselyn Moran, Alicia Vignali, Natalie Safarova, Eirini Symeonidou, Nathan Larigauderie, Esra Joo Weijenberg, Zaina Pakabomba, Leila Hammoud, Titus van der Valk, Esra Joo Weijenberg and Anastasiia Anikina
Absent FSR FMG '21-'22:	Pedro Gonzalez
Guests:	Karen Schiffner, Armèn Hakhverdian, Annemarie Zand Scholten, Edwin van Hooft, and Eveline Zandvliet
Technical chair:	Elias Marseille
Minutes:	Lieve Bastiaan

1. Opening and setting the agenda

Elias opens the meeting at 10:01, the agenda is set without changes. Edwin van Hooft graduate school director of psychology will join for topic 5.

2. Setting the draft minutes of the OV (1) of October 7th

The FSR FMG has accepted all of the dean's changes to the minutes of the First OV of '21 -'22.

3. Announcements

Dean

The faculty has two new diversity officers, who will share the job. One is Mill Hill and the other is Olga Sezneva. They started on the first of November. Mill will be focussed on diversity regarding students and teaching, Olga will focus on diversity regarding university employees. It might be nice if the council gets acquainted with Mill.

The dean has a second announcement about the quality funds, it will be discussed if the programme committees are satisfied with the results of the money. The reactions of the programme committees will be shared with the FSR. The FSR has the possibility to make suggestions to the dean based on the reactions of the programme committees. If the FSR wants to give input to the dean, the dean would like to receive this no later than 17 January..

The funds for professionalisation of teaching have not been spend in all departments (except psychology), this has been noted and will be changed.

FSR

Esra needs to leave at 11:30. Anastasiia is travelling and has mandated Alicia in case her internet connection does not work. Pedro will not be present.

4. Subject 1: Political Science Numerus Fixus

FSR

The council has received the proposal and they were happy with certain points that were outlined. The introduction of the numerous fixus and how it will be monitored, especially regarding diversity. They also liked the focus on accessibility.

The council has a few questions about what comes after the proposal, such as the specifics in selection. The proposal outlines curriculum sampling for choosing topics that the students will be examined on, the council would like to know what these are.

The council would also like to know if the week to study for the exams is enough, as the students will also have other things going simultaneously.

A council member who participated in the Numerus Fixus of Psychology had to watch two lectures that lasted two hours and read two chapters thought it was very doable. They do feel that having one focussed and on methodology made it easier.

By having the admissions office look at motivational letters, the student and their background could also be taken into account. This is something done in the USA. The council wonders if this would be done at UvA.

The council would like to see one open question that would allow for some critical thinking and creativity.

Three years ago, when one of the council members took an entrance exam something went wrong with the proctoring and all students had to be admitted, this is an issue that the faculty should be aware of.

The council thinks it is a fair point to not include an open-ended question if no feedback is required.

Seeing that there no longer is a question if there will be a numerous fixus or not and the proposal is extensive and focusses on diversity and inclusion the council gives a positive advice.

Dean

The dean has invited two people specialized in this topic to the meeting: Karen Schiffner (policy advisor), Armèn Hakhverdian (programme director), and Annemarie Zand Scholten (College director of Social Sciences).

The way in which the materials are graded should be in the hands of the programme, this should not be done in an admissions office.

The dean would like the council to have a specific stance on this matter.

Karen Schiffner, Armèn Hakhverdian, and Annemarie Zand Scholten.

Currently the matching is supposed to present the students with a fair representation of what they can expect. Over the years the matching has been toned down, students cannot be forced to participate. They do not want the numerus fixus to just be an exam, they want to take two really important first-year courses and base the entrance off of those. The aim is to have two lectures one about theory and one about methodology. This really shows the distinction between

the political science degree and, for example, a history or law degree. The matching this year will use the recorded lectures and exam questions that they plan on using for the entrance exam.

They want feedback on the time set for the students to study, they would like feedback on this from students. One idea is to have two examination moments, one that is easy for the Dutch system and another for international students. The 28 hours of study is a lot, so maybe this should be spread out across two weeks, this is also being discussed with students. For Dutch students it is not yet common to do work before university starts, international students often are. Armèn is leaning towards it being less hours rather than more.

Annemarie adds that business administration does the same thing for their matching, one theory course and one methodology, it seems to work well.

The plan for the Political Science *numerus fixus* is to have multiple choice questions. Since in a *numerus fixus* everything needs to be graded this is the only way it can be done, as the bachelors is already short on people who can grade assignments and exams. It should not be discounted that this also takes away some of the subjectivity in grading which is good for matching.

Armèn adds that written documents are incredibly sensitive to fraud, people can pay others or be aided by others thus enlarging inequalities. They plan on using a surveillance software to ensure that it is actually the student taking the exam. Karen adds that USA universities also have the option to select students based on target groups. This is not allowed in the Netherlands. She then adds that it is hard to assess motivational letters.

Armèn understands the scepticism about multiple choice, this is why the social science programmes themselves use other ways of assessing during their course. Armen could make a calculation of how many hours it would take to grade an open-ended question and what that would cost in terms of what cannot be done in the bachelor's programme. Thus, it is a matter of priorities.

The manner in which online surveillance will be done is still under debate, this is something that the exam board is worried about. This is still a really big item to discuss.

Armèn also cherishes the open requirements that Dutch universities have, this is why he does not want to go through with the *numerus fixus* unless they absolutely have to.

Karen doubts adding an open-ended question will make a big difference in the ranking. The examinations board concluded that the multiple-choice questions were enough. The questions and lectures will be provided in Dutch and English

Annemarie adds that an open question in the form of a statistical calculation might be possible as it is easy to grade.

Armèn adds that the final decision on having a *numerus fixus* has not been made, they can still decide to pull out or suspend at the end of June. Since enrolment has increased again it is likely that it will continue.

Karen Schiffner, Armèn Hakverdian, and Annemarie Zand Scholten exit the meeting.

5. Subject 2: Mock exams

FSR

The council has received some signals from students and staff with issues about missing mock exams. There is a trend of mock exams not being there, not having responses or not being

representative. They would like a solution as mock exams are mandatory according to the OER. The council would like to know if the dean agrees this is an issue. What might also happen is that teachers do not know what the mock exams need to be according to the OER. Thus, the questions that should be asked are if there are representative questions, if there are answers and if they are a good representation of the final exams.

Dean

If there are no mock exams this would be an issue. The dean thinks this is an issue for the programme committees who should check if there are mock exams in these courses. The dean will ask the teaching directors if it is true. It might also be the case that students do not know where to find their mock exams.

6. Subject 3: Blind grading

FSR

The council is wondering if the dean has questions about the blind grading advice.

The council would like to put the burden of anonymity on the student, which means that if the student does not feel that their feedback is enough, they could ask their teacher for additional feedback.

Thesis are excluded as they are very personal, this is why the council asks that it is discussed per programme which courses are suited to blind grading. An overwhelming majority of the students is in favour of the blind grading policy.

The survey the council provided has a sample of 200 students from all courses. It is not about them feeling treated unfairly but about if they would like to see it implemented.

The council sent emails to the ODC's to ask how far they were with the blind grading policy. POW is the only one that has responded, they wanted to start the programme but have not done so yet. The council would like to insist again to have a clear overview of which courses have actually implemented blind grading.

The council already knows about two programmes not doing blind grading: political science and psychology.

Dean

The teaching directors have been asked about this, many of the programmes use blind grading but not all. The question the dean has is that if exams are also meant to give feedback to students, you should not want to use blind grading because the students want individual feedback.

Sometimes individual (verbal) performance during the class is also part of grading and feedback. The dean thinks that in master's programmes and on larger essays students should be able to receive verbal feedback which makes the feedback non anonymous. The dean is not going to oblige the use of blind grading on lectures. The teaching directors have already discussed this (use blind grading as much as possible if possible) in their programme and with their teachers. It is also up to examiners to determine whether the use is suitable. Students are concerned but the question is are they concerned more in general or do they think there has been a bias towards their own grading experiences. She would also like to know if these

questions have been asked to students in all programmes. The dean thinks it is important too, but many courses have already implemented it. The teaching directors and programme directors have been asked if they have implemented it. The dean underlines that she has already asked questions about it. If it turns out that teachers are not able to use it the council can come back again. The programmes say they use blind grading in test vision exams and canvas. She can make it clear again that blind grading is used whenever it can be used.

Action points:

211206-2: The dean will inform the teaching directors that it is recommended that blind grading is used whenever possible.

7. Subject 4: Policy Plan Presentation

FSR

There are three themes with the policy plan, mental health, student engagement, and Progressive Education.

Mental health is especially important considering the pandemic.

Regarding student engagement the council would like to engage more with students. They are attending lectures to promote the council.

Dean

The dean thinks it is nice to have such a plan for the year in which the council argues what types of topics they want to cover during their council year. She agrees that the topics mentioned are important, especially the engagement with other groups and associations is good. Most of this text is not yet specific in terms of what they council wants to implement, this is also not necessary for a policy plan. The council did well in writing this plan and giving a general framework for their aims. The dean complements the council on it.

Edwin van Hooft and Eveline Zandvliet join the meeting.

8. Subject 5: Addendum FMG OER-TER

FSR

The council felt that the change to 15 credits was counterproductive as the math does not add up with the credits that the students receive for their courses. The council wonders if the choice that start a programme should or should not be up to the students. The council would like to know if they student could be advised on whether they should or should not start the masters.

With the new information presented to the council, they retract their condition_ and give their consent.

Edwin van Hooft & Eveline Zandvliet

Other universities often do have courses that are 3 credits and the UvA guideline for the zachte knip is 15 credits. The masters have over 1500 applicants and only 10 people applied to the zachte knip. For 6 people this request was approved. They all missed 5 to 12 credits. The other people that applied lacked credits that were crucial to starting the master's programme. They feel that applying the 18 credits would not help and would raise issues as the course are quite

intensive, especially in the months of September through December. Thus, it would be difficult to combine it with 18 credits from a bachelor's programme. Sometimes it is better to set some boundaries and clear guidelines for students.

Eveline adds that the bar used to be that the students needed to have their full bachelors finished. Edwin and Eveline would like to see the credits to be at 12.

Edwin feels that students always underestimate the workload of the masters and having the bachelor's courses next to it might be too much.

Dean

The dean adds that missing 2 courses when starting a masters is a lot, maybe it would be better for the students to take another year for their bachelors. Extending the credits students are allowed to miss may not be in their favour.

Edwin van Hooft and Eveline Zandvliet exit the meeting.

9. Any other business

No other business.

10. Questions and closing

Elias closes the meeting at 11:58.

No questions are asked.